

## THE ROMAN, ROMANESQUE AND GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE OF ITALY.\*

It would be interesting to consider the proper meaning, and use of the term, Romanesque. By many, who have not examined the history of art with more than ordinary attention, it is applied generally to all styles, which grew obviously out of that of the Roman empire. Particularly, it is used either for the debased Roman of the Christian basilicas, or the style of Lombardy and the Rhenish churches, with which it is common to associate, but perhaps erroneously, the early architecture of France, and that of the Normans in various parts of Europe. The names Lombard and Byzantine have equally required an accurate definition. The writer in the *Quarterly Review*,† rightly ascribes a higher merit to the "style of the Roman Christian basilica" than would be given by the name Romanesque; it is nearer allied to the Roman style of the empire. Indeed, the principal alteration in the Christian basilicas consisted in the use of arches, springing directly from columns; though this practice was not universal; whilst the omission of the entablature had examples long before the time of Diocletian, judging only from the archivolt springing from a pilaster, of which the arch of Hadrian at Athens is an example. In fact, it is almost surprising, how numerous were those features, usually considered peculiar to later styles, which found precedent, at some time or other, in the architecture of the empire. The diminutive columns of the churches of Lombardy, and the Pisan cathedral, have their prototypes at Bâalbec and Spalatro, and were actually taken from Roman buildings, as there is the best reason to suppose. The arches without archivolta, which were considered by Mr. Knight, to prove the late origin of a particular building, are found in the theatre of Marcellus, and the coupled columns at Palmyra.

The writer, above referred to, has not entered into the explanation of the term Romanesque, though he would appear to apply it to all the styles in question, exclusive of that of the Christian basilica. "The Lombard style" may define that variety which prevailed in Lombardy, and with which the style of the Rhenish country is, in fact, identical,—taking care, however, to separate it from a similar kind of architecture in France. The reviewer and Mr. Knight do, however, differ in one important respect. Whilst the latter describes the Lombard style, as existing in Italy previous to the dynasty of Charlemagne, and adduces evidence tending to shew, that through that emperor it became the style of Aix-la-Chapelle, and the Rhine; the former gives evidence, also important, that its course was in an opposite direction. The cathedral of San Michele, at Pavia, which city was the seat of Government both during the Lombard rule, and that of the later dynasty, is placed by Muratori in the 7th, or 8th century, which would warrant the conclusion respecting many examples, were the date of the cathedral unquestioned. But, as to this, even the 11th century is sometimes mentioned, whilst the reviewer finds the prototype of the style in the Porta Nigra, at Treres, a building, however, respecting the date of which there is also some difficulty. According to the latter writer, the church of San Michele did not exist during the occupation of Pavia by the Lombards. The bell-tower was probably of tramontane birth, but the opinion that the architecture of Lombardy was of "Teutonic" origin does, we think, require further proof.

The style of the basilica has been appropriately termed "a transmission, by usage and practice of Roman art;" the Romanesque style, "an imitation by barbarous hands." The former style was not without influence, even to the time of the revival, whilst at Ravenna, Venice, and Florence, complete churches were erected, although the local style was at each time entirely distinct. In Ravenna, this is most remarkable. The church of San Vitale, and that of Sant' Apollinare ad Classe, were both erected by Julianus, the minister of the Greek emperor, Justinian; yet whilst the former church is Byzantine, the latter has the style of the Christian basilica. This singularity would, however, be accounted for, by supposing the

one building to have been devoted to the service of the Greek, and the other to that of the Latin church; for there is no doubt that the schism between the two churches created a feeling of acrimony so great, that whatever was practised by one was studiously avoided by the other. The basilica style was constantly exerting a similar influence, either, as in this case, by its complete adoption, or by reflection and influence upon the style, which had originally grown out of it, of which Pisa cathedral forms an instance.

The main features of the early architecture of the Lombards—which varied little from the style which they found in the country—were in additional decoration, as in the slender compound piers or buttresses, carried from the ground to the eaves, up the fronts of churches, in the small arcades, which follow the shape of the gable or crown the apex, in the multiplication of the sinkings and mouldings of portals, in the crowd of imagery with which these mouldings are enriched, and in the neglect of the proportions of pillars. In the interiors of churches, compound piers were formed instead of single pillars; the capitals were dissimilar, but had grotesque images in nearly all cases. The style which had existed previously was that displayed in the "Palace of Theodoric," at Ravenna. Small pillars projected from the walls, sometimes supported on brackets, and one was occasionally employed as a division for two openings, as in many Saxon and Norman examples;—an arched door was also, for the first time, used. But, the reviewer doubts whether this building be of the age usually claimed for it—about 500—and gives the difference in style between the palace and the "authentic sepulchre," as a reason for his opinion. It must be allowed, that there is great difference of style; but supposing the tomb to be "authentic," the palace may still be of the date generally given to it. During several centuries in Italy, the ordinary rules for physiognomy of style are quite inapplicable, of which there are instances enough at Florence, and of which we have just seen a remarkable instance in this very city of Ravenna. In the desire to prove the "Teutonic" origin of the Romanesque style, the reviewer has not given sufficient importance to the influence of Roman architecture in the country, in which were not only its finest specimens, and precedents for the use of small columns in the Romanesque manner, but also the very materials, shaped and finished, out of which the Romanesque style came to life, and from which, as in the case of Pisa Cathedral, its examples were constructed.

In the 11th and 12th centuries, in Italy, a great number of churches were built, the Lombard Romanesque style being that generally adopted. In Tuscany, however, the return to classical principles, observable in the churches of San Miniato and Degli Apostoli, seems to have had sufficient influence over the architect of Pisa cathedral to make him eschew many of the errors of the Lombard style, and impart to the original Romanesque much of classical feeling and elegance. We have already referred to this style, of which the churches of Pisa in their original state were striking examples; and the conflicting evidence respecting the cathedral has been incidentally alluded to. It would require more space than we are at present allowed, to consider all the bearings of the question, one on which the best authorities are so much at variance. In architectural, as well as in other investigations, we frequently find, that the desire of affording a short answer to an inquiry tends to the omission of much important evidence. In England, we all recollect, how at one time a Gothic building was classed either as "Early English," "Decorated," or "Perpendicular;" it was considered to belong to only one of these styles. But it was discovered that architecture had a gradual progression—that sudden alterations were the exceptions in its history; and we then spoke of "styles of transition." Still there was some misconception, for as we may see by the reports of Professor Willis's lectures in former numbers of *THE BUILDER*, even in a window of which every part had the same date, all the details are not necessarily to be referred to the same style. Thus, in the Cathedral of Pisa, in seeking the answer, Italian or Greek, we possibly forget that both styles may have had influence.

The plan of a building, when its original state

can be discovered, affords the best grounds for a definite answer; and in the Pisan structure we should be warranted in ascribing the chief influence to Italy, because the plan is not Greek, but Italian. But, the architect may have been directed to avoid the Greek plan, and therefore the present plan still does not prove that he was an Italian. But, the altar towards the east may have been derived from the Byzantine practice, as it is not clear when the original method in Italy was changed. But, whatever his nation, he must have been one of the most able architects of his time; we find in his work all the peculiarities of style and plan, which were really valuable, adopted and improved upon, the license of the early Lombard school being rejected.—The cupola had been adopted by the Lombards from the buildings at Ravenna.

The love of arched and curved forms, amongst the architects of that school, has been the main reason with many for classing the cathedral as Byzantine; but there is every reason to suppose that the use of arcades, as here found, did not necessarily come from Greece. There were, indeed, many Greek artists in Italy about the time of the building, though they were rather operators than designers, but, it had been a reason for supposing the mosaics of the cathedral would prove its Greek origin, either from their execution by Byzantine artists, or, as Messrs. Cressy and Taylor ingeniously suggest, from an acquaintance with the polychromatic decoration of Athenian temples. But, the use of coloured marbles must have been familiar to any architect, who had examined Roman buildings, or perhaps even remains of the baths of Hadrian, which would be found on the site of the cathedral; and the Byzantine mosaic was mostly of small tesserae. In the cathedral, the coloured decorations, not in courses, are slabs of marble, bedded in cement, and may have been added to the original building, as in some other instances, accounts of which may be met with.

The late Mr. Hope, and Mr. Gally Knight have so completely described the characteristics of Lombard architecture, that we need add little to what we have already said. But the former writer, instead of confining the name to that variety, which prevailed in Lombardy and the Rhine country, has made it synonymous with the general term "Romanesque." Under the head "Lombard Architecture," he has included not only what we have described as Lombard, but Norman examples, with many others in France and England. The constant progression of architecture renders any system of nomenclature inadequate to that, which it is designed—to supplant, description, or representation; and what we have spoken of as Lombard, we might readily shew, contained within itself, during its long continuance in Italy, modifications similar to those of Gothic architecture, in other countries. The names affixed to styles of architecture, originate, either from the nations who have practised them, or, from an attempt to express their chief characteristics. "Roman Architecture" was applied in the manner first mentioned, but has become a recognised term for a particular character of design. "Romanesque," in the same way, is best used as a general appellation for all styles, which display their Roman origin. We exclude the term from the style of the Christian basilica, because we contend that it is not Romanesque, but Roman,—later perhaps than Constantine, yet produced whilst the empire existed, and differing not more from the style, which prevailed at Bâalbec and Palmyra, than the architecture of that epoch did from the almost Grecian style of the Pantheon. The terms "Christian" and "Pagan" will sufficiently distinguish the style of the ecclesiastic basilica, and that of the judicial basilica and the temple. The term "Lombard" is applied to the style of Lombardy and the Rhine, country, not only because they were united under the dynasty of Charlemagne, and the connection subsisted long subsequently, but because there are marked characteristics, distinguishing that style from other varieties of Romanesque, as we have shewn in the case of Pisa Cathedral. The Romanesque, or its Lombard variety, remained long subsequent to the introduction of Gothic architecture. Lucca Cath-

\* See the "Architecture of Pisa," page 373.  
† *Quarterly Review*, March 1845, "Gally Knight, and Benson, on Ecclesiastical Architecture," noticed at length in *THE BUILDER*, Vol. III.

\* The author of the "Theatrum Basilicæ Pisanæ" has some remarks on the position—eastward, or westward—of altars.